



# What are we doing to close our gender pay gap

**March 2025**



## Introduction

We remain committed to addressing our gender pay gap and accept that more work need to be undertaken for us to understand and address the disparities in pay across our organisation.

The launch of our new People Services operating model in April last year, with a dedicated People Strategy function, has ensured that we are now better positioned to move forwards with Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) matters and action plans. A new People Strategy will be launched this year that is aligned to our new Council Plan, which sets out our vision, ambitions and priorities as a council for the next five years. Inclusion will continue to feature as a key People Strategy outcome for us as the golden thread that weaves through the fabric of our organisation. We want everyone to see that Lancashire County Council is a great place to work and that all our employees experience this. Our staff survey results have highlighted that we still have more work to do and to help us with this we will be running a survey in the spring that will explore EDI here at the council to better understand our starting point and how we might drive the most impactful actions to improve upon that.

We are also continuing to monitor the progress and impact of embedding more flexible and hybrid ways of working across the organisation. We were ahead of the curve introducing flexible working as a 'day one' right when we launched our Working Flexibly Policy and Procedure in November 2021, more than two years before the legislative changes came into effect. We will monitor the progress of the Employment Rights Bill as it proceeds through the parliamentary process as the flexible working and family friendly provisions proposed within it will necessitate changes to our existing policies and procedures.

## Data analysis

We have looked at the data we have available to us, both within and outside of the organisation, to try and identify the reasons for the difference in pay between our male and female workforce.

Our mean and median gender pay gap figures have always been different since we first started publishing our gender pay gap data in 2017. This year our mean is 10.5% and our median is 13.6%, compared to 11.4% and 17.5% in 2023.

As our mean is always lower than our median, this suggests that our dataset is skewed due to a much higher presence of female earners in our lower and lower middle pay quartiles (pay quartiles 1 and 2). Much of our female workforce are in cleaning, caring and catering roles that traditionally attract lower levels of pay than the lowest paid roles in more male dominated work areas such as highways maintenance, that form part of pay quartiles 2 and 3.



## **Our pay and grading structure**

An agreed pay and grading structure, called the Lancashire Pay Spine, has been in place since we undertook an equal pay review in 2010, and most posts within the council are paid in accordance with this pay spine.

We use job evaluation schemes to establish the relative levels of posts in grades within the Lancashire Pay Spine according to the requirements, demands and responsibilities of the role. We also undertake evaluations for new job roles that arise and where a job significantly changes as part of a restructure (or reorganisation) of services so changes in roles are reflected, where necessary, in the grade of the role and ultimately the pay that is attached to the grade.

Other nationally agreed pay and grading scales are used in the case of our teaching roles and for employees who are paid in accordance with Soulbury Committee or Joint Negotiating Committee for Youth and Community Worker terms and conditions.

We are confident that no pay discrimination exists within the pay and grading structures that we use and that pay differentials can be objectively justified through the use of our job evaluation schemes.

## **Our starters and leavers**

We have analysed our new starter and leaver data for 2023/24 by gender and grade, to identify any trends.

At the Foundation Living Wage rate of pay, which is our minimum level of pay within the council, the numbers of males and females leaving the council exceeded the numbers that joined over this period (65 male leavers to 61 new starters, and 448 female leavers to 365 new starters).

More females started their employment with us than left at the next level of our pay spine (Grade 3) and whilst this pattern is replicated by males the numbers overall are much lower (46 male new starters to 26 leavers, compared with 131 female new starters to 89 leavers). Posts at this level are mainly residential care assistant and school catering supervisor roles, which are typically part time and undertaken by a predominantly female workforce.

## **Exit questionnaires**

Employees leaving their employment with us are asked to complete an exit questionnaire so that we can understand their reasons for leaving. The questionnaire can be completed and submitted anonymously or completed in the form of an exit interview with their manager. Questions about promotion opportunities, and opportunities for promotion to progress their careers, form part of the questionnaire.

We have analysed the anonymised exit questionnaire data for 2023/24 by gender and grade to look for any trends.



The data has shown that:

- 95 questionnaires were completed in total.
- 76% of the respondents indicated that they were female, 12% of respondents indicated that they were male and 12% chose not to disclose this voluntary information on the equal opportunities monitoring section of the questionnaire.
- 35% of female respondents said that they did not feel that they have had the opportunity for promotion to progress their careers, with the greatest number of responses coming from those undertaking roles at Grades 4 to 8 on our pay spine (in pay quartiles 2 and 3).
- 13% of female respondents said that they did not feel that they have had opportunities to access and attend career development training, with the greatest number of responses coming from those undertaking roles at Grade 4 to 8 on the pay spine (in pay quartiles 2 and 3).

## Staff survey

The staff survey is an annual online survey that was conducted between 30 September and 20 October last year. Links to the survey were sent to 13,384 employees who were working in council services at that time (teachers and teaching staff were excluded). A shortened survey was developed for staff who worked in our Catering Service. Active promotion and targeted support resulted in a response rate of 51%, which is our highest ever (up from 46% in 2023).

In terms of the key overall findings:

- 67% of female respondents agreed that they have the opportunity to progress their careers with the council if they choose to (compared with 64% of male respondents).
- 85% of female respondents agreed that if they need flexibility in their work, they can normally find a solution (compared with 90% of male respondents).

## External data sources

We have also looked at externally published workforce data, from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) and other sources, to compare our workforce population with the workforce population living and working in Lancashire.

Information from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), downloaded from the ONS website, contains a gender pay gap analysis of hourly earnings (excluding overtime) across the United Kingdom. The data from the 2024 provisional data set shows that for all employee jobs (both full time and part time) that:

- The mean gender pay gap for Lancashire as a place to work is 11.5% (our mean gender pay gap, as at 31 March 2024, is 10.5%).



- The median gender pay gap for Lancashire as a place to work is 14.7% (our median gender pay gap, as at 31 March 2024, is 13.6%).

## Action plan

Our action plan for the coming 12 months is set out below.



## Action plan

What we will do	How are we going to do this	When we will monitor our progress
<p>Use data insights to understand work preferences, motivations, aspirations and reasons for leaving</p>	<p>Through engagement with our workforce we want to understand why employees work the way that they do and what their motivations and aspirations are from a work perspective. We want to engage with our female workforce to understand if part time working is something they choose to do as it fits in with their personal lifestyle/caring responsibilities or are other job roles seen as being too restrictive (in terms of working hours, how, when and where work is undertaken) and is this preventing them from applying for other job roles or progressing their careers within the council. Or is work for some employees not about career progression.</p> <p>Following the success of our online onboarding 'journey' we will be launching a new online exit 'journey', with automated exit interviews, to give us better data insights into the reasons why employees are leaving the organisation.</p> <p>Our findings from these will be used to inform future action planning.</p>	<p>December 2025</p>
<p>Develop inclusive and targeted approaches to recruitment through a new strategic resourcing and workforce planning function</p>	<p>Investment in a new strategic resourcing and workforce planning function within People Services means that we now have the capacity to develop a centre of expertise for strategic resourcing and workforce planning, where talent, contingent workforce, succession planning and workforce planning will all sit.</p>	<p>December 2025</p>



What we will do	How are we going to do this	When we will monitor our progress
	<p>This will enable us to develop more inclusive and targeted approaches to recruitment and talent acquisition and management to help us focus and interact with potential candidates both internally and externally, where we have known recruitment and retention issues, to help address gender stereotypes that may exist in job roles and to look at how we can further opportunities for career pathways and progression through succession and workforce planning.</p>	
<p>Support the development of new employee networks</p>	<p>A new employee network offer was launched at the start of this year to help revitalise our existing network groups, with an organisational commitment to support the develop of new employee networks that employees wish to establish and self-organise.</p> <p>We know that there is interest in the development of networks for parents, working carers and younger workers that we are committed to supporting the establishment of over the next 12 months. We will also be moving our menopause peer support from an online forum into a menopause network. In addition, we will ask employees if they would welcome the development of a women's network that could be used to help identify any barriers or perceived barriers to recruitment and progression for women within the organisation.</p>	<p>December 2025</p>

